

Pete Shelley, Leader of the Punk- Rock Buzzcocks, Dies at 63

By Jon Pareles

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Pete Shelley, who supercharged pop melodies with punk energy as the leader of the British band Buzzcocks, died on Thursday at his home in Talinn, Estonia. He was 63.

His label, Domino Records, said the cause was a heart attack. Mr. Shelley had moved to Estonia, the home country of his wife, Greta, an artist, in 2012.

Mr. Shelley’s breakneck guitar strumming propelled songs that often proclaimed lovelorn vulnerability alongside acute self-consciousness. “I’m in distress, I need a caress,” he sang on one of the first Buzzcocks singles, “What Do I Get?”

Buzzcocks, formed in 1976, were in London’s punk-rock vanguard. For its initial EP, “Spiral Scratch” (1977), the band was led by its founders and songwriters, Mr. Shelley and Howard Devoto, often with Mr. Devoto as lead singer. But Mr. Devoto left before “Spiral Scratch” was released, and Mr. Shelley took over lead vocals and most of the songwriting, trading the band’s early sneers for songs about romance — often romance gone wrong.

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